United Nations A/60/331

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 September 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Items 48 and 121 of the provisional agenda*

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector

Note by the President of the General Assembly

The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jean Ping, has the honour to transmit the summary of the informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, prepared pursuant to paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 59/291 of 15 April 2005.

* A/60/150.

05-48122 (E) 090905

I. Introduction

1. The informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector were held on 23 and 24 June 2005 in New York, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 59/145 of 17 December 2004, 59/291 of 15 April 2005 and 59/293 of 27 May 2005.

2. The hearings were organized by Mr. Jean Ping, President of the General Assembly, in consultation with Member States and representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, civil society organizations and the private sector, as an input to the preparatory process of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be held from 14 to 16 September 2005 in New York.

3. The President of the General Assembly established a task force composed of representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society networks and the private sector to assist him in the preparation of the hearings.

4. The hearings were attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, civil society organizations and the private sector, Member States and observers. Of the 230 representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council, civil society organizations and the private sector invited to participate in the hearings, 134 were from developing countries and 120 were women.

5. The themes for the hearings were based on the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General of 21 March 2005[1] and the clusters defined therein, as well as on paragraph 9 of resolution 59/293, by which the General Assembly decided that all issues regarding financing for development would be discussed during the informal interactive hearings. Accordingly, five interactive sessions were held on: "Freedom from want: Millennium Development Goals 1 to 7"; "Freedom from want: Millennium Development Goal 8 and issues regarding financing for development"; "Freedom from fear"; "Freedom to live in dignity"; and "Strengthening the United Nations". At each session, the President was assisted by a moderator and a rapporteur.

6. On Thursday morning, 23 June 2005, the hearings were opened at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly by the President of the Assembly. His opening statement was followed by statements by the Deputy Secretary-General and by the President of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations.[2]

7. At the closing of the hearings on Friday afternoon, 24 June 2005, summaries of the five interactive sessions were presented by the rapporteurs, followed by a statement by the Secretary-General and a closing statement by the President of the General Assembly.

8. The hearings were a historical event, as they provided, for the first time within the framework of the General Assembly, an opportunity for interaction between Member States and representatives of civil society and the private sector.

II. Key findings

9. A number of main messages emerged from the hearings, including the strong commitment of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to contribute to making the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005 a success. There was a shared feeling that development, peace and security and human rights were interconnected and that the High-level Plenary presented a unique opportunity to make headway in bringing about a more prosperous, fair and safe world.

10. A key theme that emerged in all the interactive sessions was the emphasis on a human rights-based approach to development, peace and security and the need to elevate human rights within the United Nations. Human rights were binding obligations on Governments and encompassed political, economic, social and cultural rights.

11. Another major message was that gender equality, empowering women and protecting the human rights of women, including ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and ending violence against women, were prerequisites for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The participation of women in conflict resolution, peace negotiations and peacebuilding was also crucial. In addition, the draft outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005[3] should have given greater attention to the rights, needs and contributions of groups such as indigenous peoples, persons facing discrimination based on race, persons with disabilities, children, youth and older people, both in time of peace and during armed conflicts.

12. The hearings also sent a strong message on the need to give more attention to environmental sustainability, employment and decent work and universal access to health care and education as cross-cutting issues that are critical to realizing the Millennium Development Goals.

13. Millennium Development Goal 8 on a global partnership was a vital prerequisite for attaining the other Goals, but a shift from a market-oriented to a human rights-based approach was called for in order to achieve the Goals. The need to challenge the trade liberalization agenda in the Doha multilateral negotiations and to prioritize development concerns was expressed. There were also strong calls for keeping to the commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance, innovative sources of finance and ensuring immediate and wide-ranging debt relief and cancellation. It was felt that the outcome document should give greater attention to the need to enhance democracy and accountability in international decision-making, including through increasing participation of developing countries. At the same time, the important contribution the private sector could make to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was underlined.

14. The need to move towards a culture of prevention of conflict was recognized by all. The key to preventing conflicts lies in an approach that emphasizes human security and human rights and addresses the root causes of conflicts. There was a strong feeling that the outcome document should give greater attention to disarmament and call for a new legal instrument to control the arms trade.

15. **An important message was that Member States should recognize the responsibilities that accompany sovereignty, including a commitment to act to prevent genocide and massive human rights violations, that is, "the responsibility to protect".**

16. **Participation of civil society in the United Nations needed to be strengthened, including in the General Assembly. Meaningful participation in the proposed Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council needed to be assured.**

17. **There was widespread agreement on the need for a strengthened United Nations, including the centrality of the General Assembly as the most representative deliberative policymaking organ of the United Nations, the need to make the Security Council more democratic, accountable and transparent and the need to enhance the role of the Economic and Social Council in ensuring policy coherence. Support was also widely expressed for a Peacebuilding Commission and for a Human Rights Council that should build on the valuable work of the Commission on Human Rights, including its special procedures, rapporteurs and its subcommission.**

18. **Key issues raised on Secretariat reforms included the need for increased resources and the preservation of the Secretariat's independence and integrity. Implementation of gender mainstreaming at all levels was also stressed.**

III. Interactive session on "Freedom from want"

A. Interactive session on "Freedom from want: Millennium Development Goals 1 to 7"

1. Key cross-cutting themes

19. Many participants said that the Millennium Development Goals and the draft outcome document were rooted in a "market-based, economic-growth" approach to development that favours powerful corporate interests, exacerbates poverty and increases the gap between the rich and the poor. Instead, development strategies should be based on a human rights framework, given that Millennium Development Goals are human rights in themselves and that Governments have an obligation to advance and protect these rights. Participants also emphasized that the Goals are interlinked and must be addressed in a way that is mutually reinforcing.

20. The hope was expressed that the outcome document would recognize the important contribution the private sector can make to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Such a contribution depends on the existence of an environment conducive to the functioning of a market economy and domestic and foreign investment. In such an environment, business would be motivated to invest not only financial resources, but also time and creativity in achieving the Goals.

21. Participants in this session, as well as in all the other sessions, concurred that peace and security, human rights and development were inextricably linked and could only be achieved together. Accelerating development and meeting people's basic needs would go a long way to improving security. There was some concern that the focus of Governments on security was overriding their attention to poverty.

22. Human rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, environmental sustainability and education are cross-cutting issues contributing to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. Achieving universal access to primary education underpinned the success of the Goals. Governments must also strengthen their commitment to secondary and tertiary education and training. Participants called for eliminating school fees and other barriers that limit access to education, especially for those who live in poverty. Participants emphasized that Governments must reaffirm their commitment to and increase efforts to implement the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits on economic, social, human rights, environmental and related fields (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and other conferences).

2. Gender equality

23. Participants stressed that ensuring gender equality, empowering women and protecting women's human rights were prerequisites for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Some participants found that these issues were not given sufficient emphasis in the draft outcome document. The final outcome document should include all seven priorities identified by the Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality: strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education; guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights by ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and services; investing in infrastructure designed to reduce the amount of time women and girls spend on burdensome tasks; guaranteeing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights; eliminating gender inequality in employment; increasing women's share in national parliaments and local government bodies to 30 per cent; and ending violence against women. Participants called for strengthening the processes for mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations.

3. Environment

24. Participants stressed the importance of environmental sustainability for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, recognized the human right to live in a healthy environment and pointed out that the draft outcome document fell short of acknowledging the importance of environmental sustainability, including consumption and production patterns. Specific proposals included: increasing efforts to protect biodiversity and ensure healthy ecosystems and sustainable forests; mainstreaming environmental sustainability into all international and national strategies, notably in poverty reduction strategies; recognizing and accounting for the full value of ecosystem services in development planning, including the actual present and future costs of environmental degradation, and developing and using better tools for making assessments and calculations of this value; devoting a larger share of new flows of official development assistance to environmental sustainability; and recommitting to the Rio Declaration, in particular its precautionary principle, safeguarding against harmful effects of new technologies, such as genetically modified organisms and nano-technologies.

25. Participants recommended greater attention in the outcome document to the issues of water, sanitation and human settlements. They called on Governments to provide greater support for integrated water resources management, a doubling of aid for water and sanitation by 2010 and an integration of human settlements in development strategies.

26. Increasing agricultural productivity was considered essential to achieving poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. In light of rural women's lead role in food production, Governments should provide greater support for access to microfinance, seed supplies and technologies to women. Proposals included: securing access for the rural poor to natural resources; acknowledging and improving the role of rural communities as stewards of rural environments; and providing compensation through payments for environmental services.

27. As climate change is one of the gravest threats to the sustainability of the planet's environment and the well-being of the poor who depend heavily on natural resources, participants also agreed with the Secretary-General's call for the establishment of early warning systems for natural disasters.

28. Participants recommended institutional mechanisms that promote coherence among local, national and regional frameworks that support local pro-poor and pro-environment initiatives and called for the creation of a World Environment Organization. Participants also recognized the important contribution that the private sector could make through development and the transfer of clean technologies.

4. Health and HIV/AIDS

29. Participants proposed that the outcome document call for universal access to health-care services. Participants strongly emphasized the need to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education by 2015 and to include this target in the Millennium Development Goals. Progress in this area is essential for the achievement of all of the Goals. With respect to the Goal on maternal health, all women should have access to skilled care during childbirth, as well as to emergency obstetric care.

30. The impact of HIV/AIDS is of major concern. The disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls is leading to a feminization of the disease. Women and girls carry the burden of support and care. No efforts must be spared to reverse this trend.

31. By 2010, there must be effective universal access to a continuum of care and treatment (including psychosocial and economic support), as called for in the WHO treatment protocol, to help all living with HIV/AIDS. Access to antiretroviral drugs must be ensured. Proper investment in education and information on HIV/AIDS, as well as participation in decision-making by people living with this disease, was seen as crucial to prevention efforts.

32. Resources and commitments to fighting AIDS must be increased to at least $12 billion in 2005 and to $22 billion by 2007, with 10 per cent of this amount going towards the Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in A World with HIV and AIDS.

5. Participation and inclusion of particular groups

33. In numerous comments, representatives called for the participation and inclusion of particular groups, especially in developing and implementing strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Participants emphasized that indigenous peoples play an important role in development and environmental preservation. Proposals included: protecting the rights of indigenous peoples through a dedicated treaty, such as the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples; recognizing the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, that is, independent management of their territories and resources by their institutions and their right to self government; ensuring environmental sustainability as the basis of the local economy and food security, as well as opportunities to participate in the market economy; and recovering and fortifying the local knowledge, spiritual and rights systems.

34. Local communities and grass-roots organizations play a key role in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals, and should be recognized and supported in their efforts. The outcome document should include strategies to strengthen their abilities to develop and implement development strategies and monitor progress towards the achievement of the Goals. It was recommended that 25 per cent of national Millennium Development Goals-related budgets be allocated to community-based projects and indigenous people to speed up implementation.

35. It was recommended that the rights of persons with disabilities and the need to engage them in development strategies be addressed in the outcome document. Their access to education, employment and health services must be ensured, as well as their inclusion in the decision-making process.

36. There were also calls for the outcome document to acknowledge that youth can be creative agents of change when they are effectively engaged in developing, implementing and monitoring development strategies. Greater investment in capacity-building for youth would be necessary to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and ability to be seen, heard, understood and take leadership roles. Expectation was expressed that Governments must create and promote employment and training opportunities for youth.

37. One child participant called for poverty reduction efforts to target children. She also expressed concern over violence against children in times of war and conflict and over child labour, especially in mines and plantations. Children need to be listened to and their views taken into consideration.

38. The private sector could make a significant contribution towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through public-private partnerships that are equitable and mutually reinforcing for all parties involved.

39. As an instrument of participation and inclusion, access to information and communication technology should be highlighted. The High-level Plenary Meeting should recognize the need to bridge the "digital divides" between the rich and the poor, between developed and developing countries and between women and men.

B. Interactive session on Millennium Development Goal 8 and issues regarding financing for development[4]

1. Key cross-cutting themes

40. Participants recognized the link between financing for development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Millennium Development Goal 8 on a global partnership for development, which is also at the centre of the Monterrey Consensus, was a key prerequisite for the achievement of the other Goals. In promoting Goal 8, however, the emphasis needed to shift from market-based approaches, which have served to exacerbate poverty, to a human rights-based approach that places people at the centre of development. Many participants said that the draft outcome document should be strengthened and provide a clear and concrete road map for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

41. Extreme poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, gender inequality, unfair trade liberalization, and the persistent indebtedness in many African countries were causes for particular concern. Government representatives provided reassurances that Africa would be the focus of their development efforts.

2. Domestic policy issues

42. Some participants noted that public-private partnerships resulted in increased private control of assets and reduced access for the poor to affordable services and called for strengthening the public sector to ensure equitable access to basic goods and services. There were also calls for microfinance and rural-development schemes to empower the poor, improve access to education, water and health services and for combating pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

43. The issue of protecting the rights of workers and ensuring adequate social protection was raised. It was proposed that an additional development goal ("Millennium Development Goal 9") be established on ensuring productive and decent work and increasing employment opportunities, which would translate the four dimensions of decent work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) — employment, basic rights at work, social protection and social dialogue — into targets. This also requires the right regulatory framework to ensure that the private sector contributes responsibly to a decent work agenda.

44. Several Member States expressed the view that developing countries need to bear shared responsibility for their own development through continued efforts to improve governance and reduce corruption. This would require capacity-building and better access to information, especially with regard to policies and public expenditures. At the same time, some representatives pointed to the importance of ownership by developing countries of their development policies. Multilateral institutions and bilateral donors should support these efforts by reducing conditionalities.

3. Foreign direct investment

45. Private sector participants and some Member States stressed the importance of the private sector in generating income and employment to eradicate poverty.

Private investments, including foreign investments, were the key to sustained growth and employment generation. Foreign direct investment was identified as a significant resource for development, creating wealth, employment, technological innovation and providing a range of other community services. Particular attention was called to: bureaucratic difficulties to establish a business; property rights; and effective enforcement of contracts and protection of creditor rights.

46. Some participants argued that oftentimes foreign direct investment did not benefit the poor. Actions of transnational companies could sometimes be an obstacle to development. The importance of ensuring corporate social responsibility and accountability, including with regard to the rights of workers, was also stressed.

4. International trade

47. Participants challenged the focus of many Governments on revitalizing the Doha trade negotiations. Many detailed the negative impacts of trade liberalization and called for a fair trade framework in all trade negotiations and for trade support that is not at the expense of aid and debt relief. Development concerns must be appropriately addressed in the course of transparent and inclusive negotiations leading up to the High-level Plenary Meeting and the Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in December 2005. Participants supported the call of the Secretary-General for the provision of duty-free and quota-free market access for all exports from the least developed countries. The representative of the private sector emphasized the importance of dismantling barriers to South-South trade, from which developing countries can make even greater gains.

48. Participants called on developed countries to abolish all forms of subsidies that damage the agricultural production and markets of developing countries. They stressed the importance of fair and stable prices for commodities exported from developing countries. Sufficient flexibility in determining the level and nature of their tariffs was seen as another critical policy tool for developing countries. Participants lamented that developing countries were pressed to liberalize the services sector, especially essential services such as water, energy, health and education, which reduced access to these sectors by poor people, particularly women. Developing countries should also be helped to enhance their export capacities. Bilateral and regional trade agreements should be consistent with the outcomes of the United Nations major conferences and summits and should promote and protect human rights. It was proposed that Governments conduct gender reviews and impact assessments of these agreements to identify and address negative impacts on women.

5. Aid

49. Many participants expressed concern about the current distribution, volume, trends, effectiveness and conditionality of aid. Participants reaffirmed that if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met, the pace of reaching the 0.7 per cent target should be drastically accelerated.

50. Several participants supported innovative sources of financing for development. It was hoped that the proposed new mechanisms, such as the proposed International Finance Facility, would generate additional resources for development by 2015 and beyond, although concern was raised that the Facility would not raise additional money but only "frontload" official development assistance. Without

additional refinancing mechanisms, there would be a sharp decrease in flows of official development assistance after 2015.

51. Participants argued that debt relief, humanitarian or military assistance should not be counted as official development assistance. They considered the growing gap between military spending and official development assistance to be scandalous. Some Member States pointed out that the growth of official development assistance and progress towards the 0.7 per cent target had been commendable, particularly in the European Union.

6. External debt

52. There was a broad consensus that immediate and wide-ranging debt relief was necessary. Several participants expressed the need for unconditional cancellation of debt. Recent steps taken by the Group of Eight to write off $40 billion in debt owed by 18 countries, mainly in Africa, were welcomed. However, it was stressed that debt relief should be widespread, without negative conditionalities and should not come at the expense of additional aid.

7. Systemic issues and participation

53. Participants deplored the continued net transfer of financial resources from developing to developed countries and called for efforts to reduce global imbalances. They called for further enhancement of the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in all international economic decision-making and norm-setting institutions. Many also called for greater increased coordination of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization with, and their accountability to, the United Nations and its development and human rights agendas.

54. Participants stressed the need for participatory democracy to ensure the rights of the poor, the oppressed and children. It was also recommended that greater representation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels of government and the United Nations be achieved and that efforts towards the empowerment of women and gender equality be pursued.

IV. Interactive session on "Freedom from fear"

A. Prevention of armed conflict

1. Key cross-cutting themes

55. Since preventing armed conflicts is feasible and saves money and resources, the international community should shift from reacting to proactively preventing conflict. States have a special responsibility to protect as well as to prevent armed conflict. At the same time, civil society and non-governmental organizations should play a more prominent role at all levels of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Marginalized groups should be meaningfully engaged. Integration of a gender perspective and women's equal participation are central in all conflict resolution, peace and security processes.

56. Emphasis should be placed on human security, respect for human rights and reallocating military budgets towards development and poverty eradication. The private sector must also assume its responsibilities in conflict prevention. Its capacity to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction and to adopt transparent and accountable approaches should be maximized. The control of small arms and disarmament of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons is a prerequisite for peace and security.

2. From reaction to prevention

57. State responses to armed conflict continued to be reactive rather than preventive. Participants called for a paradigm shift towards a culture and strategy to prevent conflict and build peace. Addressing underlying causes for conflict (through measures such as peace and human rights education, job creation for youth and improved governance with the active participation of civil society) is a prerequisite for prevention. The role of civil society, especially of communities with local knowledge, is crucial. Equally, there is a need to strengthen early warning and early response capacities of States and the community. Member States and civil society representatives underlined that when prevention failed, human security must take precedence over State security and States and the United Nations must accept the "responsibility to protect". There was a call for a strengthened capacity for mediation in the Secretariat.

3. Peacebuilding Commission

58. Participants endorsed the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. Participants said that the Commission must engage actively with civil society, in particular women and communities, and recognize the central role of women and communities in creating lasting conditions for peace. Local and regional partnerships with civil society are vital. The Commission can play a crucial role in generating resources to put war-torn societies back on track. Peacemaking and peacebuilding strategies should be proactive and address poverty, health, education, gender inequality and all forms of discrimination as well as other causes of fear, in a comprehensive manner. The Peacebuilding Commission should be well funded and participants called also for more resources for peacebuilding.

4. Participation of civil society

59. Speakers emphasized that active participation of civil society at large at all levels, grassroots, regional and national, is crucial to preventing conflict and building peace. Meaningful participation by civil society requires adequate funding. It is critical to bring in the voices of local authorities, community-based organizations, women, youth, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities. persons with disabilities and other groups with special interests or needs. Civil society organizations with regional perspectives should also be included in decision-making as a matter of course. Emphasizing that peace and development cannot be imposed from the outside, participants reaffirmed that non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations are indispensable bridges to public opinion.

5. The role of youth

60. The role of youth in building peace at the local level had to be recognized and built upon. Young people, often used "as cannon fodder" in conflict, can play a

catalytic role in the peaceful transformation of society if they are included in peace negotiations and peacebuilding. It is also crucial in Africa, in particular, to address the high rates of unemployment among the young and undertake concrete measures for job creation. More resources and policy attention must be devoted to ensuring that children and communities as a whole benefit from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

6. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming

61. Governments must recognize that women, despite being victims of war, have a central role in the political processes of peace negotiations and post-conflict reconciliation. Women's organizations must be included at the peace table and strengthened through adequate funding. Attention was called to gender-based violence as a tool of war and oppression before, during and after conflict. Impunity for such violence must be stopped.

7. Strengthening institutions

62. Participants called for strengthening institutions at all levels in order to more effectively prevent conflict. Some speakers called for the creation of an armed force to protect workers in the field and for clear modalities of cooperation between the United Nations and civil society. Participants urged Governments to tap into and strengthen the capacities of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, especially at the local level, given their knowledge, access to the community and mediation skills. Regional intergovernmental organizations must engage actively with civil society partners in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes.

B. Peace and security

1. Human security

63. The key to preventing violent conflict lies in an approach that emphasizes human security, that is the security of the people, as much as State security. Addressing economic insecurity, guaranteeing the availability and affordability of essential health care, combating illiteracy and educational deprivation are critical to human security. Protecting women and children from violence and trafficking and ensuring the safety of groups, such as refugees and indigenous peoples, are of the utmost importance. Regarding indigenous peoples, community empowerment and the strengthening of their community organizations and leaders was also important. While States have the primary responsibility to protect the most vulnerable groups, it should be recognized that they are not the only actors, especially at the local level. Civil society representatives are essential to instilling popular confidence in state and local institutions and thus to support a transition to lasting peace.

2. Nuclear weapons and disarmament

64. Several speakers pointed to the devastating human consequences of the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, which are in many places the real "weapons of mass destruction". They highlighted the need for a greater emphasis on disarmament in the outcome document and asked that nuclear weapons States commit to the elimination of nuclear weapons, as required by article VI of the

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. While welcoming moves towards legally binding agreements in the areas of brokering, marking and tracing, speakers called on the international community to support the call for an arms trade treaty to clearly control all arms transfers in accordance with agreed standards of human rights and international humanitarian law. Arms trafficking must be internationally controlled and sanctioned and illicit trade in arms must be criminalized. Arms exporting States had a responsibility to ensure that their exports were not misused to undermine security.

3. Conflict, post-conflict reconstruction and the private sector

65. Representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society called on the private sector to assume its responsibility in the arms trade and in the exploitation of natural and mineral resources, which often triggered conflict. For their part, representatives of the private sector said that they could play an important role in post-conflict reconstruction when investments are most needed, but when businesses are most hesitant to invest. In those situations, small and medium-size investments by local entrepreneurs should be supported. To make this happen, collaborative multi-stakeholder efforts would be needed. States would have to provide the necessary guarantees for private sector engagement, securing, for example, immediate and sustainable investment to reconstruct war-torn societies by creating jobs and generating small and medium-sized enterprises. The United Nations must create mechanisms that facilitate and encourage private sector investment in post-conflict situations, especially by local entrepreneurs.

4. The use of force and sanctions

66. Participants condemned the use of force to resolve conflicts (in particular "preventive wars") and called for a peaceful resolution of tensions. Governments must use force only as a last resort and identify and agree on clear guiding rules and principles on doing so. Countries in conflict should receive equal attention, regardless of their geographical situation or the economic interests of permanent members of the Security Council. There also was a call for targeted, rather than blanket sanctions, and for fair and transparent procedures for applying and lifting sanctions, with clear recognition of their devastating impact on the lives of civilians.

V. Interactive session on "Freedom to live in dignity"

A. Key cross-cutting themes

67. Participants in this session emphasized that human rights are binding obligations on Governments and are the foundation of peace, security and development. Human rights must be elevated within the United Nations and given a prominent place in the outcome document. The document should affirm the equal importance of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and should ensure meaningful implementation of those rights. It should also affirm the universality of human rights, the value of cultural diversity and the importance of tolerance. It should give much greater attention to women's rights. Participants stressed the need to acknowledge the essential role of civil society and non-governmental organizations in the human rights movement and to assure their

meaningful participation in the new human rights mechanisms. Participants supported the establishment of a Human Rights Council.

B. Treaty body system

68. The system of United Nations human rights treaty bodies should be strengthened in a manner that enhances its effectiveness, rationalizes its procedures and preserves its particular, specialized areas of expertise. Special attention should be given to promoting the implementation of the recommendations of the treaty bodies.

C. Equality, non-discrimination and special groups

69. The High-level Plenary Meeting should highlight the importance of combating discrimination on the basis of race, colour, gender, language, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and other such grounds. It should address the particular role and rights of children and youth. It should give explicit attention to the human rights of minorities, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, older men and women, people with HIV/AIDS and others. It should call for the inclusion of their perspectives and for disaggregated data to identify the human rights needs and risks they faced.

D. Human rights of women

70. Participants underlined that no real progress on the Millennium Development Goals will be achieved without improving the protection of women's rights. They therefore recommended that the status of women's rights should be elevated and that increased resources be provided for women-specific entities within the United Nations system.

71. Participants called for better efforts to confront, prosecute and punish violence against women, expand women's access and rights to land and inheritance, protect their sexual and reproductive rights, counter the threat they face from HIV/AIDS and combat human trafficking. A time-bound plan was proposed on how to deal with women's human rights and violence against women. Women should be seen as actors, not as victims.

E. Rule of law

72. The importance of countering unilateralism and ending the many human rights abuses being committed in the name of the so-called "war on terrorism" should be recognized. Participants asked for stronger recognition of "the responsibility to protect", as well as the broader application of that principle. Combating impunity, supporting the United Nations tribunals, cooperating with the International Criminal Court and the ratification of the Rome Statute should be included as responsibilities of all States. Participants also called for the adoption of a policy of non-use of the veto in the Security Council in cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and massive human rights violations. The responsibility to provide

reparations and compensation to victims of massive human rights violations should be recognized.

F. Democracy

73. Domestic initiatives for the advancement of democracy should be supported. To this end, the High-level Plenary Meeting should endorse the proposed Democracy Fund. The United Nations should not view democracy as merely the equivalent to elections, but recognize it as a domestic process that cannot be imposed from outside.

G. Economic and social rights

74. Poverty should be recognized as a human rights violation. Better efforts should be made to fight corruption, strengthen good governance, ensure the participation of the poor in decision-making processes and avoid sacrificing human rights to market forces. Participants recognized the important value of technical cooperation, development assistance and human rights education and learning in advancing the realization of all human rights. They called for due attention to be given to economic and social rights and to the protection of the human rights of workers, including freedom of association and trade union rights. Participants noted that, while Governments remain the primary human rights duty bearers, the private sector, including businesses of all sizes, must be encouraged to embrace a human rights framework in its activities.

H. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

75. Participants underscored the important role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the need for public information about its work. They called for the outcome document to endorse the plan of action of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to include an explicit reference to the doubling of the Office's regular budget resources within five years and an increase in its voluntary funding. The New York Office of OHCHR should be significantly expanded, as should its field presences and its rapid response capacities. OHCHR engagement with the Security Council should be made regular and systematic and it should be included in all relevant Headquarters debates and discussions.

VI. Interactive session on "Strengthening the United Nations"

A. Key cross-cutting themes

76. Participants highlighted that an overarching objective of a strengthened United Nations was to ensure human security, building on the interdependence of human rights, development, peace and security. In this regard, participants agreed on the need for principal organs of the United Nations, including the proposed Human

Rights Council, to have the capacity to respond to critical situations that arise within their respective fields of competence. Civil society participation in these organs should be ensured through effective mechanisms.

77. In the interest of transparency, it was proposed that the United Nations create an ombudsman to oversee achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to support community task forces in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of these goals at the local level.

B. General Assembly

78. There was broad agreement among participants that the High-level Plenary Meeting should reaffirm the centrality of the General Assembly as the most representative deliberative policymaking organ of the United Nations. Calls were made for the General Assembly to adopt the modalities of conference preparatory committees, with the involvement of civil society, to enhance the effectiveness of policymaking.

79. In the follow-up to the High-level Plenary Meeting, the modalities of conference preparatory committees should be utilized for negotiations in four important areas: (a) the Human Rights Council; (b) the Peacebuilding Commission; (c) a binding instrument regulating small arms; and (d) the responsibility to protect.

80. Many participants were of the view that a strengthened United Nations required stronger and deeper relations with civil society at large. Specific proposals included institutionalizing the General Assembly's hearings with civil society and holding them on an annual basis, as well as ensuring civil society's access to the sessions of the Assembly and other organs.

C. Economic and Social Council

81. A strengthened Economic and Social Council should act as the guardian of the United Nations development agenda and become a high-level development cooperation forum. This would require that the Council move beyond mere coordination of development institutions and ensure effective policy coherence centred on United Nations norms and standards, including the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

82. Many participants called for the international financial institutions to be brought into the framework of the United Nations policy dialogue, so as to increase their accountability in the context of development and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and hold them to high standards of good governance, economic management and human rights. Participants called for mandatory reporting by the international financial institutions to the Economic and Social Council, as well as for a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations, the institutions and the World Trade Organization, which would ensure policy coherence and accountability. To guide the process, an executive committee with regionally balanced composition should be created.

83. Participants urged that the Economic and Social Council be given an enhanced role in identifying and meeting the needs of populations in post-conflict situations

and addressing issues of human security. It was proposed that the Peacebuilding Commission work closely with the Council.

D. Security Council

84. There was widespread agreement on the need to reform the Security Council so that it becomes more democratic, accountable and transparent and more able to preserve peace. Some participants urged ending permanent membership and restricting or ending the veto. Calls were made for expanding elected membership, thus allowing broader representation from low- and middle-income countries.

85. For many speakers, the improvement of the working methods of the Security Council was the most crucially needed reform. This included the development of a code of conduct that would restrict the use of the veto in the case of genocide and more frequent use of the "Arria Formula" to enhance civil society participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

E. Human Rights Council

86. Many participants supported the establishment of a Human Rights Council. They emphasized that this body should be created as a principal organ of the United Nations. It should be inclusive in its membership and regionally representative. It was proposed that the membership in the new Council should be based on (a) election by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly; (b) ratification of international human rights conventions and other human rights instruments and a solid record of their observance; and (c) acceptance by members of a periodic review of their human rights record. The Council should have a universally applied peer review mechanism that addresses the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in all countries.

87. Speakers noted that the Human Rights Council must be equipped to rapidly respond to large-scale human rights violations and to ensure implementation and follow-up to its recommendations. Its working methods should build upon the strengths of the Commission on Human Rights, including the effective access and participation of non-governmental organizations, its special procedures, rapporteurs and its subcommission. The special procedures should be strengthened, their independence maintained and their recommendations implemented. Some participants emphasized that the new Council should not undermine the valuable work of the Commission on Human Rights. Other proposals in this context included transferring existing working groups established under the Commission to the new Council. It was also proposed that the Council should have the ability to alert the Security Council in urgent situations, which would be facilitated by establishing an office in New York for sustained communications with the Security Council.

88. Participants agreed that the mandate, structure and membership of the proposed Human Rights Council will still have to be elaborated on. Participants demanded an enhanced role for the General Assembly in following up on the decisions and recommendations of the new Council.

F. Secretariat reform

89. A key issue raised by participants was the need for reforms that preserved the independence and integrity of the United Nations Secretariat. Calls were made to increase the resources available to the Secretariat and to put in place measures for employment security of Secretariat staff. Participants pointed to the gender imbalance in the United Nations Secretariat and called for an increase in the percentage of women in high-level posts. Calls were also made for the Secretariat to implement gender mainstreaming throughout its work and to upgrade the status and resources of women-specific entities within the United Nations system. The importance of the safety and security of international civil servants was also emphasized.

Notes

[1] A/59/2005.

[2] For the verbatim record of the plenary meeting, see A/59/PV.105.

[3] A/59/HLPM/CRP.1.

[4] See A/59/855.